THE MYTH OF ISLAMIC TOLERANCE

Robert Spencer

Chapter 1 of

The Myth of Islamic Tolerance:
How Islamic Law Treats Non-Muslims

2005

Prometheus Books
59 John Glenn Drive
Amherst, New York 14228-2197

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> Like Christians, Muslims respect and revere Jesus. Islam teaches that Jesus is one of the greatest of God's prophets and messengers to humankind.
>
> Like Christians, every day, over 1.3 billion Muslims strive to live by his teachings of love, peace, and forgiveness. Those teachings, which have become universal values, remind us that all of us, Christians, Muslims. Jews, and all others have more in common than we think.

So read an advertisement that the Council on American Islamic Relations (CAIR) placed in California newspapers in March 2004. For such ostensible attempts to promote harmony and cooperation between Christians and Muslims, CAIR has, despite the arrests of three of its officials on terror-related charges in 2002 and 2003,[1] maintained a reputation as a neutral civil rights organization dedicated to helping Muslims find a place within American secular society.

This ad campaign was just one part of larger efforts by Muslims, particularly in Western countries, to present a vision of Islam that is different from Osama bin Laden's—benign where his is lethal, open and accepting where

his is fanatical and intransigent. The council and its allies have succeeded in virtually ruling out of polite society any idea of Islam except one that insists it is a religion that Western non-Muslims need not fear and must not despise. Their presentation of Islam as another of the world's great religions, closely akin to Judaism and Christianity and, like them, liable to be "hijacked" through no fault of its own by "extremists" who commit violence in its name, is one that is accepted as axiomatic by most Americans—to do otherwise would be regarded in many circles as tantamount to committing the cardinal American sin of "racism," despite the fact that Islam is not a race and most Muslims in the world today are not members of the ethnic group with which they are most often identified, the Arabs.

As a result, in America today millions of people, including many in influential sectors of the government and media, believe in Islam. Not thai they believe in Allah and his prophet Muhammad, but they nonetheless have something akin to religious faith in an idea of Islam itself. This faith consists of various assumptions that have emanated from academia, the media, the State Department, groups like CAIR, and even the president of the United States and that have by now become unquestioned assumptions held by millions.

A cornerstone of this secular faith in Islam is that Islam is a tolerant faith. Jews and Christians, we are told, lived in harmony with Muslims during the era of the great Islamic empires of the past. When radical Muslims bombed Madrid on March 11, 2004, commentators reminded us that when Muslims ruled Spain, it was a beacon of tolerance and the envy of Europe. When radicals bombed synagogues in Istanbul on November 15, 2003, we were told that such bombings were particularly heartbreaking in a city that for so long had known peace and harmony between Muslims, Jews, and Christians.

The dogma of Islamic tolerance has important political implications. Sclerotic European states eyeing the rapid growth of their Muslim popula-tions console themselves with tales of old al-Andalus, reassuring one another that Islamic hegemony not only wasn't all that bad—it was a veritable golden age. Investigators in Europe and America are discouraged from monitoring activity in mosques. After all, goes the dogma, terrorism isn't an Islamic problem. Islam is a supremely tolerant faith. No, terrorism is a problem of political grievances or socioeconomic imbalances. If Islam has anything at all to do with it, it is only as a tool of unscrupulous religious leaders, who probably don't even really believe in Islam at all, who use religious language to excite and manipulate the uneducated masses. European and American politicians and religious leaders

make careful overtures to growing Islamic communities, which they assume will —with a few exceptions—assimilate at least to the extent of becoming peaceful and active participants in the political process. Why not? Islam is a tolerant faith.

In the face of its general acceptance and the opprobrium that awaits those who decline to toe the line, it seems churlish at best (if not a manifestation of more sinister intent) to challenge the idea of Islamic tolerance. But it is precisely because of these and other political uses to which the idea is put that the challenge must be made. The dogma of Islamic tolerance has become a potent political and cultural weapon; accordingly, it cannot and must not be out of bounds to examine the truth of this dogma.

If this dogma is false, its destructive power will be very great. Europeans and Americans will find themselves in the position of having encouraged millions of Muslims to come to their shores to live as equals, only to find that Islam doesn't accept a position as just one among a community of disparate religions but must struggle to make itself supreme. As Bat Ye'or, the great historian of dhimmitude, the institutionalized oppression of non-Muslims (dhimmis: "protected" or "guilty" people) under Islam, puts it:

> The civilization of dhimmitude does not develop all at once. It is a long process that involves many elements and a specific mental conditioning. It happens when peoples replace history by myths, when they fight to uphold these destructive myths, more than their own values because they are confused by having transformed lies into truth. They hold to those myths as if they were the only guarantee for their survival, when, in fact, they are the path to destruction. Terrorized by the evidence and teaching of history, those peoples prefer to destroy it rather than to face it. They replace history with childish tales, thus living in amnesia, inventing moral justification for their own self-destruction.[2]

If that is indeed the case, the political implications will be as manifold and complex as those that follow from the assumption that Islam is tolerant. Either way, the investigation is of the utmost urgency.

In this book are gathered a good number of the groundbreaking historical investigations of Bat Ye'or, who pioneered the study of dhimmitude as a distinct phenomenon of Islamic history, theology, and law.[3] Other essays delve into attendant matters: the fearless and erudite former Muslim Ibn Warraq examines

the real legacy of enormously influential academic Edward Said. Said, of course, was a pioneer in his own right, tarring generations of careful scholars of the Islamic world as racists and imperialists (or, as Said would have had it, “Orientalists”) and elevating the myth of Islamic tolerance to the dogmatic level in American and European universities. Mark Durie explores the teachings of Islam on issues of tolerance and peaceful coexistence as well as a number of related matters in his witness statement from the trial of two Christian preachers in Australia. The preachers were sued, rather intolerantly, by a Muslim group for allegedly defaming Islam and thereby violating Australia’s newly minted hate crime laws. Their daring and creative defense was to have recourse to the Islamic writings themselves, which Durie surveys brilliantly here.

Other, smaller pieces bring to light various ways in which the myth of Islamic tolerance wields influence today among policy makers, academics, and opinion makers. Each of these in its own way reveals the power and uses of the myth and demonstrates why it is so important to investigate the his-torical claims, as well as the assertions about Islamic law and theology, that are being made.

Another section of the book brings together some extremely revealing material from the UN Commission on Human Rights. Since these are documents delivered to address particular problems and issues before the United Nations, some of this material is overlapping, appearing in one document and again in another. I ask the reader’s patience and understanding: these records reveal the stark realities of Islam’s human rights record; some repetition was necessary in order to preserve their character. These documents show conclusively that the source of the conflict that the Islamic world has with the non-Muslim world is not Israel; Israel acts only as the canary in the mine-shaft, as this material about rising antisemitism and Judeophobia makes clear. But the human rights records of Iran, Sudan, Pakistan, and elsewhere, and the enormous obstacles that Muslim freethinkers and apostates face, have nothing to do with Israel: they illuminate a deeper problem of ingrained Islamic intolerance. These documents illuminate many attempts to use the myth, as well as many outright contradictions of the myth, made by Islamic states at the United Nations—as well as the cognitive dissonance created for and by these states by the disagreements between UN human rights declarations and various provisions of Islamic law, the Sharia.

These UN statements and other documents indicate that the historical and jurisprudential issues discussed in the other essays are very much alive today—as alive as the myth of Islamic tolerance.

HISTORY AS POLITICS:
THE USES OF THE MYTH OF ISLAMIC TOLERANCE

The myth of Islamic tolerance was from its inception a political creation. Ibn Warraq surveys its origins with magnificent precision and directness in the foreword to this volume. And according to Bat Ye'or, it gained great currency because of nineteenth-century European political machinations in the Balkans: "Curiously, this myth started in Bosnia-Herzegovina in the 19th century. It alleges that Turkish rule over Christians in its European provinces was just and lawful. That the Ottoman regime, being Islamic, was naturally 'tolerant' and well disposed toward its Christian subjects; that its justice was fair, and that safety for life and goods was guaranteed to Christians by Islamic laws. Ottoman rule was brandished as the most suitable regime to rule Christians of the Balkans."[4]

The European politicians' interest in propagating the myth of Islamic tolerance stemmed from the geopolitical realities of the day. "This theory," Bat Ye'or continues, "was advanced by European politicians in order to safeguard the balance of power in Europe, and in order to block the Russian advance towards the Mediterranean. To justify the maintenance of the Turkish yoke on the Slavs, this yoke had to be presented to the public opinion as a just government. The Ottoman Empire was painted by Turkophiles as a model for a multi-[ethnicj. multi-religious empire."[5]

Of course, reality was considerably different. Non-Muslims in the Ottoman Balkan regions were subject to substantially the same regulations for dhimmis that prevailed elsewhere in the Islamic world and were dictated by the Sharia. These laws are outlined by Samuel Shahid and Bat Ye'or in several essays later in this book. Exceptions to the harsh inequalities mandated by these laws only proved the rule, for they generally resulted from periods of laxity. These were all too often followed by Islamic revivals that featured a reassertion of harsh Sharia strictures, boding ill for non-Muslim populations. For instance, in 1758 the British ambassador to the Sublime Porte noted that laws mandating that dhimmis must dress in a manner distinct from the dress of Muslims, and in a way that demonstrated their inferior status, were being enforced with a new rigor —a rigor that sprang from the deep religious convictions of Sultan Mustafa III: "The order against Christians & Jews Dress, except in modest Cloaths, browns blacks … & as to caps & boots is most rigorously executed in a Manner

unknown before, which alarms most all those who are not Mahometans, & makes them apprehend the utmost Rigour; it seems however but natural, when it is considered, that it comes from a self-denying religious Prince."[6]

The imposition of a dress code may seem to be a small matter in those days before Hitler-imposed Star of David badges on German Jews, but, as Shahid and Bat Ye'or demonstrate in their essays in this volume, the dress requirements were just the most visible element of a detailed system of regulations designed to ensure that dhimmi Jews and Christians would "feel themselves subdued," as commanded in the Qur'an (sura 9:29). By no stretch of the imagination does all this bespeak the atmosphere of openness, mutuality, and tolerance that is suggested by modern purveyors of the myth. This is especially true in light of the penalties: the same British official wrote that a Jew had been beheaded after being caught in clothes that violated the orders.

In 1860 Consul James Zohrab wrote a report from Sarajevo to the British ambassador to the Porte, Henry Bulwer, that sounds as if it could have been filed in the last ten years. "The hatred of the Christians toward the Bosniak Mussulmans," he tells Bulwer, "is intense." Some might imagine today that this hatred was a consequence of Christian intransigence and fundamen-talism and a refusal to respond with any generosity to the proffered hand of Islamic tolerance. But that was not actually the case. "During a period of nearly 300 years," Zohrab explains, the Christians "were subjected to much oppression and cruelty. For them no other law but the caprice of their masters existed."[7]

Testimony like this made it difficult for the myth of Islamic tolerance to gain acceptance among any who cared to consult the historical record. During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, indefatigable scholars of Islam such as Sir William Muir, David S. Margoliouth, Thomas Patrick Hughes, Arthur Jeffrey, and many others, while not specifically investigating the plight of the dhimmis, had made available to English readers a wealth of material that abundantly established Islam's attitude toward non-Muslims as hardly one of tolerance.

Consequently, for the mythmakers history itself had to be made over. This wasn't accomplished definitively until a considerable time after the birth of the myth; but it was ultimately accomplished in a most spectacular manner. In 1978, a Christian Arab professor, Edward Said, published *Orientalism,* which quickly became the defining text for academic study of Islam in the West. Said didn't so much establish that Islam had a genuine tradition of tolerance as make it racist to suggest otherwise. The great scholars of Islam such as Muir and

Margoliouth were, in Said's view, simply tools of Western imperialism, whose visions of the Orient were not objective scholarship but politically motivated tracts designed only to portray the Muslim world as needing the guiding hand of Christian colonial masters.

Any criticism of Islam, including any questioning of the myth of Islamic tolerance, was thereafter deemed ipso facto imperialist and racist by an academic establishment that quickly fell in thrall to Saidism as an integral element of its overall program of hostility to the Western civilization and heritage. The myth of Islamic tolerance reigned supreme not because it was borne out by the facts, but because to challenge it was to identify oneself with a despised and discredited political program. So Said and his followers were actually guilty of the very thing for which they excoriated the Orientalists: they set out to force the facts to give way to overriding political realities.

Saidists are now in virtually complete control of American academic study of Islam. Their baneful influence is superbly illustrated by Daniel Pipes in "Jihad and the Professors," which shows just how divorced from reality their analyses of this key Islamic concept have become.

And since words like *jihad* have been introduced by Yasir Arafat, Osama bin Laden, Saddam Hussein, and others into international geopolitics, the rapid and total victory that the Saidists won in the academic sphere has also exerted a harmful influence on public policy. *Orientalism* appeared just as the multiculturalist ethic was taking root in the United States and Western Europe. Saidism was simultaneously a manifestation of that ethic and a further legitimization of it. Even to point out that Islamic societies had been less than tolerant toward their non-Muslim populations, and that this intolerance was mandated and reinforced by quite specific provisions of Islamic law, was to engage in an unacceptable ethnocentrism. This was the genesis of the attitude that prevented American officials (including the president of the United States) from using anything but the vaguest of generalities ("evildoers") to describe their Islamic terrorist foes after the World Trade Center and Pentagon attacks of September 11, 2001. To take notice of the Islamic motiva-tions and goals of the jihadist attackers, except to deny their significance, would have made the Bush administration vulnerable to charges of racism: the kiss of death in American politics. So while Bush occasionally spoke of jihadists in reference to particular situations, he much more often energetically avoided any public linkage of Islam with the global jihad network that he began to confront in the war on terror.

This avoidance on many occasions made public statements by officials

become something of a theater of the absurd. When American National Guard Spc. Ryan Anderson, a convert to Islam, was arrested after allegedly trying to contact and join up with al Qaeda, reporters asked a Guard spokesman, Lt. Col. Stephen Barger, about Anderson's religion. Barger replied: "Religious preferences are an individual right and responsibility, and I really can't get into it."[8] As if a devout Methodist or Zen Buddhist would have any interest in joining al Qaeda.

Ironically enough, even as Barger declined to consider the possibility that Islam might somehow be implicated in Anderson's behavior, he did so by means of a statement could only have been made by a Westerner. Islam, with its strong sense of the *umma,* the worldwide community of Muslim believers that transcends nationality, race, and political boundaries, as well as its detailed rules for virtually every aspect of human behavior, does not consider religion a private matter. But the possibility that a religious belief could have political implications, even if that belief involves so avowedly worldly and political a religion as Islam, has been ruled by the Saidists and their allies to be beyond the bounds of civilized discourse. That Islam cannot give rise except in "hijacked" form to extremism and violence, and that it is in its true form broadminded, tolerant, noble, and magnanimous—more so in many ways than Christianity—must be accepted as axiomatic by people like Lieutenant Colonel Barger. Otherwise, they risk losing their jobs and worse: being stigmatized as the spiritual and intellectual kin of people like David Duke and Bull Connor.

The myth of Islamic tolerance and its attendant dogmas are guarded jealously—sometimes in quite intolerant ways. When a French publisher undertook a translation of my book *Islam Unveiled* in 2003, he and the translator quickly began to receive death threats. Translator Guy Milliere explains: "I sent him [the publisher] the translation of the first thirty pages. A couple of weeks later I started to receive death threats by e-mail: 'You must be an enemy of Islam; you will die for what you do'; 'You must be a Jew; I hope somebody will slit your throat, you dirty Jew pig,' etc. … I asked the police to act; I have received no answer."[9]

In other words, you must say that Islam is peaceful and tolerant, or we will kill you.

THE CURRENT MYTH AND THE CURRENT REALITY

The almost universal prevalence of the myth of Islamic tolerance today has led to a strange phenomenon: non-Muslims hastening to assure the public that the Islam of the terrorists is not the "true Islam," which is, they maintain, a benign and tolerant thing. The former archbishop of canterbury, George Carey, after drawing the ire of the Muslim community in Britain by critical remarks about Islamic extremism, attempted to make amends in May 2004 by explaining, "Our world is in great peril. I am talking rather about a sharp ideological tension that separates the West from another world, that we call Islamic and yet does not reflect the true values of Islam."[10]

Carey didn't explain what qualified him to declare what are the "true values of Islam" and what aren't, or to dismiss the claims by Islamic radicals themselves to represent "true" or "pure Islam." Yet in Carey's England, Islamic radicals such as Sheikh Omar Bakri of the al-Muhajiroun group (which held a pro-Osama celebration on the first anniversary of the September 11 attacks) and Abu Hamza al-Masri (former imam of the Finsbury Park Mosque, where several jihadists including shoe bomber Richard Reid once worshiped) continue to teach young Muslims that their version of Islam is the "pure" (Salafi) form of the religion—and, according to the BBC, "moderate Muslims leaders have remained largely silent and have yet to provide a credible alternative."[11]

Around the same time that Carey was opining about "true Islam," the Army News Service published an opinion piece by a staff sergeant named Russell Bassett, drawing a sharp distinction between the terrorism of Osama bin Laden and Islam. Bassett quotes an American Muslim soldier, Spc. David Burgos: "I have read the Koran several times and there Islam teaches its followers to be peaceful. Islam is all about giving life, not taking it."[12] Bassett accepts this at face value and dismisses Islamic terrorists as motivated by politics, not religion; he makes no attempt, of course, to examine the Islamic justifications put forward by Osama and others for terrorism.

Bassett, to be sure, is not engaging in academic discourse, but his commentary is more than just the opinion of one American sergeant. It is a manifestation of the United States government's official position on these matters, and its publication by the Army News Service is clearly intended to advance Bassett's opinions among American troops.

Even stranger are instances when Western non-Muslims have taken it upon themselves to lecture radical Muslims about their supposed misuse of their faith. In November 2003, two American converts to Islam, Jeffrey Leon Battle and Patrice Lumumba Ford, were sentenced to eighteen years in prison for trying

to join the Taliban and wage jihad against their fellow Americans. At the sentencing, US district judge Robert Jones scolded Ford: "You do not represent the Muslim faith. Muslims do not engage in the activities you engaged in. You are an insult to that faith."[13]

Such assumptions, of course, mesh perfectly with the image that many Muslims try to create for themselves in the eyes of the West. The Saudi English-language publication *Arab News* blamed Westerners' negative impressions of Islam on those Westerners' own prejudices. After quoting "blasphemous rhetoric that is the cause of Muslim rage today" from Chris-tian fundamentalist preachers Franklin Graham, Pat Robertson, Jerry Fal-well, and others, the columnist declares: "The practice of anti-Islam in the US needs to be addressed. The Muslim is not plotting to kill the infidel. The Arabs and Muslims are not all secretly plotting to take over the world in order to establish an Islamic caliphate."[14]

But Graham, Falwell, and Robertson didn't invent the idea that Muslims want to reestablish the caliphate, with all its intolerant provisions for non-Muslims. The *Arab News's* reassurances ring hollow in the face of the statements and activities of radical Muslim groups around the world. Al Qaeda's online magazine, *Voice of Jihad,* exhorted jihad warriors in fall 2003: "We draw the attention of the *Mujahideen* to the strategy adopted by the Sheikh of the *Mujahideen,* Abu Abdallah Osama bin Laden, and Sheikh Dr. Ayman al-Zawahiri, and agreed to by many of the great *Mujahideen,* regarding combat against the enemy: Our number one enemy is the Jews and the Christians, and we must free ourselves to invest all our efforts until we annihilate them—and we are able do this if Allah allows us to do it—because they are the main obstacle to establishing the Islamic state."[15]

This goal of establishing the Islamic state—ruled by a caliph—is not al Qaeda's alone. The Muslim group Hizb-ut-Tahrir, which is active principally in Central Asia but also has members in Yemen, Egypt, and other Middle Eastern countries, as well as a presence among Muslim emigrants in the West, has openly declared its intention to "restore a worldwide Caliphate, uniting the world under Islamic rule."[16] The Indonesian Jemaah Islamiyah group that was responsible for the Bali bombing of October 2002 has also stated its intention to establish an Islamic state ruled by a caliph in Southeast Asia.[17]

In England, Sheikh Omar Bakri's Al-Muhajiroun group declared on its Web site: "Today the burden of working to establish the Khilafah and implement

the Shari'ah is on the neck of all Muslims, it is an obligation [Fard| of the highest order that requires utmost effort and sacrifice. If we neglect this collective Fard then we are calling out to the wrath and anger of Allah [swt|. Muhammad [saw] and his Sahabah |ra] had the great honour of establishing the first Islamic State in Madinah by a bloodless coup de tat ***[sic].*** Today we have the privilege of following the same footsteps and working for this righteous and honourable cause."[18]

Even the Islamic Affairs Department of the Saudi embassy in Washington, DC, called for the restoration of the caliphate, despite the *Arab News's* ascribing of this idea to the "blasphemous rhetoric" of so-called Islamophobes: "Today's false idols, which dominate over the entire world, are Democracy, Capitalism, Socialism and Communism. Islam instead calls for a Khilafa [Caliphate] based on consultation, and a just economic system based on Zakat and a prohibition of usury."[19] Ultimately, an outcry brought about the removal of this material from the embassy Web site but no retraction from Saudi officials.

Yet no amount of evidence seems to shake the power of the myth of Islamic tolerance in Western public discourse. There seems to be no shortage of non-Muslim Westerners ready to assume that the myth is true and to behave accordingly, despite the potentially lethal consequences that could result from ignoring the words of the mujahedin themselves. A typical example came when Bill Graham, Canada's minister of foreign affairs, called for building bridges of understanding to Muslims as a response to terrorists' "exploiting Islam as a pretext for violence." Graham praised Canada's "diverse and flourishing Muslim communities," showing no awareness of the possibility that some within those communities subscribed to the radical Muslim caliphate/Sharia program. All this despite evidence to the contrary afforded by Canada's much-publicized Khadr family, which was deeply involved with Osama bin Laden and jihad in several ways—which so offended Canadian prime minister Jean Chretien that he personally intervened to help secure the release of one Khadr family member, Ahmed Said Khadr, after he was jailed in Pakistan on suspicion of involvement in the bombing of the Egyptian embassy in 1995.[20]

Graham's statement reflected a Canadian government policy that has been torpid in implementing antiterrorism measures, did not support the Iraq war, and has not been a particular friend of Israel. Nonetheless, the day after his column appeared, an associate of Osama bin Laden named Khalid Khawaja told Canada's *National Post* that Western civilization was "selfish" and warned

Canadians that the country could become the site of suicide bombing attacks. He praised death in an Islamic jihad as the best way to die and asked Canadians, “So how can you fight with us?”[21]

Despite the strong Islamic character of Khawaja’s remarks, Graham made no statement revising his views. He seems certain that Khawaja and others like him represent a discredited radical fringe within a tolerant and benevolent religious tradition; statements and activities by that fringe group, even though conducted on a global scale, do not seem to shake his faith in the myth.

NON-MUSLIMS IN THE QUR’AN

The attitudes of modern Muslims toward non-Muslims are rooted, of course, in the Qur’an. which Muslims believe to be the eternal words of Allah dictated to the prophet Muhammad through the angel Gabriel. The Qur’an occupies an influence in the Islamic world that is far greater than that of the Bible in the West, even during the heyday of Christendom; it exerts a dominant and formative influence on the Muslim mind and culture.

Proponents of the myth of Islamic tolerance point to verses such as this one: “Those who believe [in the Qur’an], and those who follow the Jewish [scriptures], and the Christians and the Sabians, any who believe in Allah and the Last Day, and work righteousness, shall have their reward with their Lord; on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve” (sura 2:62; cf. 5:69 and 22:17). Muslim spokesmen in the West like to quote such verses and to stress, as in the Council on American Islamic Relations ad, the commonality between Islam and Christianity—and sometimes even between Islam and Judaism.

However, the preponderance of Qur’anic testimony favors not tolerance and harmony between Muslims and non-Muslims, but just the opposite. A fundamental component of the Qur’an’s view of non-Muslims is the often repeated and implacable belief in its own superiority: “The Religion before Allah is Islam” (sura 3:19), or, as another translation has it, “The only true faith in God’s sight is Islam.” Muslims, accordingly, are also superior to others: “Ye are the best of peoples, evolved for mankind, enjoining what is right, forbidding what is wrong, and believing in Allah.” By contrast, most Jews and Christians (“People of the Book”) are wrongdoers: “If only the People of the Book had faith, it were best for them: among them are some who have faith, but most of

them are perverted transgressors" (sura 3:110).

According to orthodox Muslim belief, the Qur'an is the final and perfect revelation from Allah, the one true God. It confirms earlier revelations—a fact of which Muhammad was evidently so sure that in the Qur'an he has Allah telling him that if he is harboring any doubts about the veracity of his experiences with Gabriel, he need only check with those who received scriptures before Muhammad's time—that is, Jews and Christians: "And if thou (Muhammad) art in doubt concerning that which We reveal unto thee, then question those who read the Scripture (that was) before thee. Verily the Truth from thy Lord hath come unto thee. So be not thou of the waverers" (sura 10:94).

Yet the testimony that the earlier scriptures were supposed to bear to the coming of Muhammad has been obscured by Jews and Christians. In a lengthy passage in a late sura (chapter) of the Qur'an, "al-Baqara" (the Cow), Allah castigates the Jews and Christians for rejecting Muhammad when they know better:

> We gave Moses the Book and followed him up with a succession of messengers; We gave Jesus the son of Mary Clear (Signs) and strengthened him with the holy spirit. Is it that whenever there comes to you a messenger with what ye yourselves desire not, ye are puffed up with pride? Some ye called impostors, and others ye slay! They say, "Our hearts are the wrappings (which preserve Allah's Word: we need no more)."
>
> Nay, Allah's curse is on them for their blasphemy: Little is it they believe. And when there comes to them a Book from Allah, confirming what is with them, although from of old they had prayedfor victory against those without Faith, when there comes to them thatwhich they (should) have recognised, they refuse to believe in it but the curse of Allah is on those without Faith. Miserable is the price for which they have sold their souls, in that they deny (the revelation) which Allah has sent down, in insolent envy that Allah of His Grace should send it to any of His servants He pleases: Thus have they drawn on themselves Wrath upon Wrath. And humiliating is the punishment of those who reject Faith.
>
> When it is said to them. "Believe in what Allah Hath sent down," they say, "We believe in what was sent down to us": yet they reject all besides, even if it be Truth confirming what is with them. Say: "Why then have ye slain the prophets of Allah in times gone by. if ye did indeed

believe?”

> There came to you Moses with clear (Signs); yet ye worshipped the calf (even) after that, and ye did behave wrongfully. And remember We took your covenant and We raised above you (the towering height) of Mount (Sinai), (saying): “Hold firmly to what We have given you, and hearken (to the Law).” They said: “We hear, and we disobey.” And they had to drink into their hearts (of the taint) of the calf because of their Faithlessness. Say: “Vile indeed are the behests of your Faith if ye have any faith!”. . .
>
> Say: Whoever is an enemy to Gabriel—for he brings down the (revelation) to thy heart by Allah’s will, a confirmation of what went before, and guidance and glad tidings for those who believe—whoever is an enemy to Allah and His angels and messengers, to Gabriel and Michael, lo! Allah is an enemy to those who reject Faith. We have sent down to thee Manifest Signs (ayat); and none reject them but those who are perverse. Is it not (the case) that every time they make a covenant, some party among them throw it aside? Nay. Most of them are faithless. And when there came to them a messenger from Allah, confirming what was with them, a party of the people of the Book threw away the Book of Allah behind their backs, as if (it had been something) they did not know! … If they had kept their Faith and guarded themselves from evil, far better had been the reward from their Lord, if they but knew! (sura 2:88-103)

By the evidence of this passage and others in the Qur’an, the Jews and Christians who remain in the world after the time of Muhammad are rene-gades who have rejected this final revelation out of corruption and malice and who have exchanged truth for falsehood: “The Jews call ‘Uzair [Ezra] a son of Allah, and the Christians call Christ the son of Allah. That is a saying from their mouth; (in this) they but imitate what the unbelievers of old used to say” (sura 9:30). Nor is that remotely all. The Jews “have incurred divine displeasure): in that they broke their covenant; that they rejected the signs of Allah; that they slew the Messengers in defiance of right: that they said, ‘Our hearts are the wrappings (which preserve Allah’s Word; We need no more)’; nay, Allah hath set the seal on their hearts for their blasphemy, and little is it they believe . . .” (sura 4:155). They even misrepresent the scriptures: “There is among them a section who distort the Book with their tongues: (As they read) you would think it is a part of

the Book, but it is no part of the Book; and they say, 'That is from Allah,' but it is not from Allah. It is they who tell a lie against Allah, and (well) they know it!" (sura 3:78). They blasphemously doubt Allah's power: "The Jews say: 'Allah's hand is tied up.' Be their hands tied up and be they accursed for the (blasphemy) they utter" (sura 5:64).

The Qur'an also frequently censures Christians for believing in false doctrines—including beliefs that are central to the faith as it had been understood and practiced for as long as six centuries before Muhammad began preaching. Apparently misunderstanding the nature of the Christian Trinity, one verse has Allah quizzing Jesus: "O Jesus the son of Mary! Didst thou say unto men, worship me and my mother as gods in derogation of Allah?" Jesus answers: "Glory to Thee! Never could I say what I had no right (to say)" (sura 5:116).

In the book Allah frequently insists that he has no son—a fact Muslims believe to be an essential component of true monotheism. "Say: 'Praise be to Allah, who begets no son, and has no partner in (His) dominion: Nor (needs) He any to protect Him from humiliation: yea, magnify Him for His greatness and glory!'" (sura 17:111).

Finally Muhammad weaves his charges against Jews and Christians together by condemning Christians for believing that Jesus was crucified, and Jews for believing that they crucified him: "They said (in boast), 'We killed Christ Jesus the son of Mary, the Messenger of Allah"; but they killed him not, nor crucified him, but so it was made to appear to them, and those who differ therein are full of doubts, with no (certain) knowledge, but only conjecture to follow, for of a surety they killed him not" (sura 4:157).

Because of the cavalier, self-serving, and underhanded ways in which they have treated Allah's message, both Jews and Christians live under the curse of Allah: "Allah's curse be on them: how they are deluded away from the Truth!" (sura 9:30).

The idea that Jews and Christians are accursed recurs several times in the Qur'an. Both have rejected Allah and his messenger Muhammad:

> Allah did aforetime take a covenant from the Children of Israel, and we appointed twelve captains among them. And Allah said: "I am with you: if ye (but) establish regular prayers, practice regular charity, believe in my messengers, honor and assist them, and loan to Allah a beautiful loan, verily I will wipe out from you your evils, and admit you to gardens

with rivers flowing beneath; but if any of you, after this, resisteth faith, he hath truly wandered from the path of rectitude."

But because of their breach of their covenant. We cursed them, and made their hearts grow hard; they change the words from their (right) places and forget a good part of the message that was sent them, nor wilt thou cease to find them—barring a few—ever bent on (new) deceits: but forgive them, and overlook (their misdeeds): for Allah loveth those who are kind.

From those, too, who call themselves Christians, We did take a covenant, but they forgot a good part of the message that was sent them: so we estranged them, with enmity and hatred between the one and the other, to the day of judgment. And soon will Allah show them what it is they have done.

O People of the Book! There hath come to you our Messenger, revealing to you much that ye used to hide in the Book, and passing over much (that is now unnecessary): There hath come to you from Allah a (new) light and a perspicuous Book, wherewith Allah guideth all who seek His good pleasure to ways of peace and safety, and leadeth them out of darkness, by His will, unto the light, guideth them to a path that is straight, (sura 5:12-16)

All this leads directly to the Qur'an's notorious verses of jihad, such as this one from later in the same sura: "And slay them wherever ye catch them, and turn them out from where they have turned you out; for tumult and oppression are worse than slaughter; but fight them not at the Sacred Mosque, unless they (first) fight you there; but if they fight you, slay them. Such is the reward of those who suppress faith" (sura 2:190). Many Western Muslim spokesmen today deny that this verse applies to Jews and Christians of this age or any other, as they are in the Qur'an "People of the Book" and not idolaters. However, it is clear from the long passage above that Jews and Christians are indeed counted in the Qur'an among those who "suppress faith" and thus must be met by Muslims not with talk of tolerance and peaceful coexistence but with jihad warfare: "And fight them until persecution is no more, and religion is all for Allah. But if they cease, then lo! Allah is Seer of what they do" (sura 8:39).

Indeed, the sura that most Muslim scholars believe to have been the last one revealed—and hence the portion of the Qur'an that takes precedence over any contradictory passage revealed earlier—is sura 9, at-Tauba ("Repentance").

It explicitly enjoins Muslims to wage war against the People of the Book until they either convert to Islam or are subdued as second-class dhimmis: "Fight those who believe not in Allah nor the Last Day, nor hold that forbidden which hath been forbidden by Allah and His Messenger, nor acknowledge the religion of Truth, (even if they are) of the People of the Book, until they pay the Jizya [a special tax on non-Muslims] with willing submission, and feel themselves subdued" (sura 9:29).

In the end it is the will of Allah that Islam will triumph over all other religions: "He it is Who hath sent His messenger with the guidance and the Religion of Truth, that He may cause it to prevail over all religion, however much the idolaters may be averse" (sura 9:33).

This is tantamount to a declaration of war, and its spirit pervades the entire Muslim holy book. So far is the Qur'an from modern notions of tolerance and peaceful coexistence that it even warns Muslims not to befriend Jews and Christians—apparently including those who "feel themselves sub-dued" and are paying the *jiyza:* "O ye who believe! Take not the Jews and the Christians for your friends and protectors. They are but friends and protec-tors to each other. And he amongst you that turns to them (for friendship) is of them. Verily Allah guideth not a people unjust" (sura 5:51).

It is ironic in light of all this that the Qur'an also criticizes Jews and Christians for being *intolerant.* Allah warns Muhammad that "never will the Jews or the Christians be satisfied with thee unless thou follow their form of religion. Say: 'The Guidance of Allah, that is the (only) Guidance.' Wert thou to follow their desires after the knowledge which hath reached thee, then wouldst thou find neither Protector nor helper against Allah" (sura 2:120; cf. 2:135).

This is the Qur'an that pious Muslims cherish and memorize in its entirety; it is for them their primary guide to understanding how they should make their way in the world and deal with other people. It is nothing short of staggering that the myth of Islamic tolerance could have gained such currency in the teeth of the Qur'an's open contempt and hatred for Jews and Christians and incitements of violence against them—and a testimony to the ease with which one can convince himself of the truth of something in which one wants to believe, regardless of evidence to the contrary.

NON-MUSLIMS IN THE HADITH

The Hadith, the traditions of the sayings and doings of the prophet Muhammad, are second in authority only to the Qur'an for most Muslims. In fact, Sunni Islam, the sect of 85 to 90 percent of Muslims worldwide, takes its name from the Sunnah, the Traditions, which Sunnis follow in contradistinction to Shi'ite Islam, which from the days of its great imams and in a dif ferent way thereafter invested more authority than do Sunnis in religious leaders. Sunnis rely instead, at least according to the theory, on the teachings of Muhammad as recorded in the Hadith and explicated by Islamic jurists.

The Hadith is voluminous, and much is of doubtful authenticity. But in the early centuries of Islam six collections were identified by Muslims as being substantially authentic and therefore trustworthy: those known today as *Sahih Sittah* ("reliable collections"): *Sahih Bukhari, Sahih Muslim,* the *Suncm of Abu Dawud*, the *Suncm of Ibn Majah*, the *Sunan of an-Nasai,* and the *Jami of at-Hrmidhi.* These, as applied and interpreted by jurists from the four principal Sunni *madhhabs*, or schools of jurisprudence (Hanafi, Hanbali. Maliki, and Shafi'i) form the primary source for the innumerable regulations of Islamic law, which governs virtually every aspect of life—from personal hygiene to macroeconomics. Although it is likely—and Western scholars have established in many cases—that many of these traditions that are revered as reliable are just as tenuous and inauthentic as many of those that are universally rejected, this fact has had little impact thus far in the Islamic world. Many of them enjoy normative status as principal sources for religious beliefs and practices. Critical analysis of both the Qur'an and Hadith has been slight and furtive among Muslims—largely owing to the fact that Islamic tolerance, both in history and today, does not generally extend to a willingness to allow the words of Allah to be examined and prodded. To allow this would be tantamount to admitting that the Qur'an is a human book, which few pious Mus-lims have been prepared to do ever since the comparatively rationalist Mutazilite sect was vanquished centuries ago and the idea that the Qur'an was uncreated was raised to the level of an unquestionable dogma. In any case, since these traditions are regarded as authentic by orthodox Muslims, they play a key role in the elaboration of Islamic intolerance and were accordingly muted in the era of the imposition of the myth of tolerance.

The Traditions' message regarding non-Muslims consists primarily of an amplification of that of the Qur'an. The Qur'an's inconsistent statements about whether or not Jews and Christians will enter paradise are resolved: "It is narrated on the authority of Abu Huraira that the Messenger of Allah (may peace

be upon him) observed: By Him in Whose hand is the life of Muhammad, he who amongst the community of Jews or Christians hears about me, but does not affirm his belief in that with which I have been sent and dies in this state (of disbelief), he shall be but one of the denizens of Hell-Fire."[22] So once again we see that if there is any tolerance in Islam at all, it is only provisional, in anticipation of the great Day on which Allah will make it manifest to all that "the Religion before Allah is Islam" (sura 3:19). Another Hadith has Muhammad saying:

> On the Day of Resurrection, a call-maker will announce, "Let every nation follow that which they used to worship." Then none of those who used to worship anything other than Allah like idols and other deities but will fall in Hell (Fire), till there will remain none but those who used to worship Allah, both those who were obedient (i.e., good) and those who were dis-obedient (i.e., bad) and the remaining party of the people of the Scripture. Then the Jews will be called upon and it will be said to them, "Who do you use to worship?" They will say, "We used to worship Ezra, the son of Allah." It will be said to them, "You are liars, for Allah has never taken anyone as a wife or a son. What do you want now?" They will say, "O our Lord! We arc thirsty, so give us something to drink." They will be directed and addressed thus. "Will you drink." whereupon they will be gathered unto Hell (Fire) which will look like a mirage whose different sides will be destroying each other. Then they will fall into the Fire. Afterwards the Christians will be called upon and it will be said to them. "Who do you use to worship?" "They will say. 'We used to worship Jesus, the son of Allah.'" It will be said to them, "You are liars, for Allah has never taken anyone as a wife or a son," Then it will be said to them, "What do you want?" They will say what the former people have said. Then, when there remain (in the gathering) none but those who used to worship Allah (Alone, the real Lord of the Worlds) whether they were obedient or disobedient.[23]

Of course, consigning other groups to hellfire doesn't necessarily mean that one will not consent to live in peace as equals with them on earth. But Islam in its totality attempts an audacious recasting and, in a real sense, appropriation of Judaism and Christianity—a kind of theological imperialism that can serve as

a useful analogy and paradigm for the true nature of the tolerance that Islamic jurists envision for this world.

For Muhammad did not hesitate to appropriate the central figures of Judaism and Christianity and to claim that they were Muslim. Noah. Abraham, Moses, and Jesus appear in the Qur'an and Hadith as Muslim prophets (see suras 2:87, 2:136, 3:84, 33:7, 42:13, etc.). Their religion was Islam—until it was corrupted by their wicked followers (who were, of course, the ancestors of the Jews and Christians, who remained outside the fold of Islam). In the Christians' case, Jesus will set this right in the latter days, returning to end the dhimmi status of non-Muslims in Islamic soci-eties—not by initiating a new era of equality and harmony, but by abolishing Christianity and imposing Islam upon everyone:

> Allah's Apostle said, "By Him in Whose Hands my soul is, surely (Jesus,) the son of Mary will soon descend amongst you and will judge mankind justly (as a Just Ruler); he will break the Cross and kill the pigs and there will be no Jizya (i.e., taxation taken from non Muslims). Money will be in abundance so that nobody will accept it, and a single prostration to Allah (in prayer) will be better than the whole world and whatever is in it." Abu Huraira added, "If you wish, you can recite (this verse of the Holy Book): 'And there is none of the people of the Scriptures (Jews and Christians) But must believe in him (i.e., Jesus as an Apostle of Allah and a human being) before his death. And on the Day of Judgment He will be a witness against them'" (4.159).[24]

To drive the point home, another tradition adds that Muhammad said: "How will you be when the son of Mary (i.e., Jesus) descends amongst you and he will judge people by the Law of the Qur'an and not by the law of Gospel?"[25]

Still, while all this and similar material is useful to refute the pseudo-multicultural posturing of contemporary Muslim advocacy groups (particularly in the United States), it doesn't add up in itself to anything particularly intolerant. Theological absolutism of a similar kind can be found in virtually all sects of Christianity, as well as in other religious traditions. But although sura 109 of the Qur'an—often quoted today—envisions a live-and-let-live attitude between Muslims and non-Muslims, that is far from the last word on the subject in either the Qur'an (as we have seen) or the Hadith. The Hadith expand upon verses 9:5 and 9:29 of the Qur'an with accounts of Muhammad's battles against

unbelievers. One of the most notable of these records not a battle but an epistolary encounter between the Prophet of the new religion and the leader of the old empire, Heraclius of Byzantium. The account in Sahih Bukhari is full of unlikely details, including the assertion that Heraclius was mightily impressed by Muhammad and all but acknowledged his prophethood. To the dismay of courageous Muslim apostates through the centuries, the Heraclius of this hadith burbles to one of Muhammad's men: "I asked you whether there was anybody who, after embracing [Muhammad's] religion, became displeased and discarded his religion; your reply was in the negative. In fact, this is the sign of True Faith, for when its cheerfulness enters and mixes in the hearts completely, nobody will be displeased with it."

But most noteworthy is the brief, easy-to-overlook threat lobbed into the letter from the holy man: "Embrace Islam," he exhorted Heraclius, "and you will be safe."[26] No guarantee of safety or offer of truce is made in the event that Heraclius declines to accept Islam.

The imperative was to invite non-Muslims to become Muslim—as Muhammad did Heraclius and Osama bin Laden did the United States in the late 1990s—and then fight those who refuse. This hadith delineates these choices, in accord with sura 9:29's mandate to fight Jews and Christians until they pay the non-Muslim poll tax *(jizya)*—or, of course, convert to Islam. Says Muhammad:

> Fight in the name of Allah and in the way of Allah. Fight against those who disbelieve in Allah. Make a holy war; do not embezzle the spoils; do not break your pledge; and do not mutilate (the dead) bodies; do not kill the children. When you meet your enemies who are polytheists. invite them to three courses of action. If they respond to any one of these you also accept it and withhold yourself from doing them any harm. Invite them to (accept) Islam; if they respond to you. accept it from them and desist from fighting against them… . If they refuse to accept Islam, demand from them theJi/ya. If they agree to pay, accept it from them and hold off your hands. If they refuse to pay the tax, seek Allah's help and fight them.[27]

When speaking of non-Muslim dhimmis, the *sahih ahadith* are primarily concerned with the collection of the *jizya*—which constituted the "source of the livelihood" of the Muslims.[28] The traditions say little about the way in which

Islamic societies are soon going to ensure that non-Muslims "feel themselves subdued." in accordance with sura 9:29. But Muslims from the earliest ages seem to have been intent to fulfill this command and devised numerous ingenious ways to do so. This resulted in an elaborate system of regulation for the treatment of dhimmis that enforced their humiliation and inferiority on a daily basis—and that remained constant in the Islamic world, although they were enforced with varying degrees of ferocity in different regions over the ages. These regulations, as intolerant as they are, remain part of the Sharia to this day. Radical Islamic terror organizations around the world have repeatedly declared their intention to impose the Sharia wherever and whenever they can. This stands as an enduring threat to non-Muslims in nations with Muslim majorities and elsewhere.

NON-MUSLIMS IN ISLAMIC JURISPRUDENCE

As the schools of Islamic jurisprudence developed, they constructed upon these hadiths and passages of the Qur'an a legal structure for the treatment of non-Muslims. The features of this remained remarkably consistent across the centuries, and among all the legal schools. Take, for example, contempo rary Saudi sheikh Marzouq Salem al-Ghamdi, who explained in a sermon the terms in which an Islamic society should tolerate the presence of non-Muslims in its midst:

> If the infidels live among the Muslims, in accordance with the conditions set out by the Prophet—there is nothing wrong with it provided they pay *Jizya* to the Islamic treasury. Other conditions are . . . that they do not renovate a church or a monastery, do not rebuild ones that were destroyed, that they feed for three days any Muslim who passes by their homes … that they rise when a Muslim wishes to sit, that they do not imitate Muslims in dress and speech, nor ride horses, nor own swords, nor arm themselves with any kind of weapon: that they do not sell wine, do not show the cross, do not ring church bells, do not raise their voices during prayer, that they shave their hair in front so as to make them easily identifiable, do not incite anyone against the Muslims, and do not strike a Muslim. … If they violate these conditions, they have no protection.[29]

Ghamdi's list of conditions was taken practically verbatim from traditional sources of Islamic law regarding non-Muslims. Nor was Ghamdi the only modern-day Muslim spokesman interested in reviving these ancient strictures. In 2001 Sheikh Ibrahim Madhi preached a quite similar sermon on Palestinian Authority television:

> We welcome, as we did in the past, any Jew who wants to live in this land as a Dhimmi, just as the Jews have lived in our countries, as Dhimmis, and have earned appreciation, and some of them have even reached the positions of counselor or minister here and there. We welcome the Jews to live as Dhimmis, but the rule in this land and in all the Muslim countries must be the rule of Allah. . . . Those from amongst the Jews and from amongst those who are not Jews who came to this land as plunderers, must return humiliated and disrespected to their countries.[30]

Responding to a similar statement made in 1999 about Palestinian Christians by Sheikh Yussef Salameh, the undersecretary for religious endowment for the Palestinian Authority, the Catholic archbishop of the Galilee, Butrus al-Mu'alem, thundered: "It is strange to me that there remains such backwardness in our society. . . . there are still those who amuse themselves with fossilized notions."[31]

Fossilized these notions may be, but abrogated or repudiated they are not. And unfortunately, those amusing themselves with them are not a small or insignificant group. In 1991 there appeared a new English translation of *'Umdat al-Salik* (Reliance of the Traveller), a Shafi'i manual of Islamic law compiled by fourteenth-century jurist Ahmad ibn Naqib al-Misri (d. 1368). Someone who didn't know that virtually every other Islamic legal document contained much the same material might assume that this was the one to which Ghamdi and Madhi to reacquaint themselves with the particulars of dhimmi status. "The subject peoples," it declares, must "pay the non-Muslim poll tax *(jizya)*" and "are distinguished from Muslims in dress, wearing a wide cloth belt *(zunnar);* are not greeted with *'as-Salamu 'alaykum* [the traditional Muslim greeting, "Peace be with you"]; must keep to the side of the street; may not build higher than or as high as the Muslims' buildings, though if they acquire a tall house, it is not razed; are forbidden to openly display wine or pork,. . . recite the Torah or

Evangel aloud, or make public display of their funerals or feastdays; and are forbidden to build new churches."[32]

'Umdat al-Salik itself is not solely of interest to historians. The translator, an American convert to Islam named Nuh Ha Mim Keller, explains in an introduction that "not a single omission has been made" from Ibn Naqib's Arabic text, "though rulings about matters now rare or nonexistent have been left untranslated unless interesting for some other reason."[33] Underscoring its relevance for modern Muslims (and wary non-Muslims) is an endorsement from Cairo's venerable Al-Azhar University. Fath Allah Ya Sin Jazar, the general director of research, writing, and translation at Al-Azhar's Islamic Research Academy, gave the translation, and the manual itself, a resounding endorsement: "We certify that the . . . translation corresponds to the Arabic original and conforms to the practice and faith of the orthodox Sunni Community."[34]

Joseph Schacht, the great Columbia University professor of Arabic and Islamics in the days before Edward Said and his followers politicized the field, sums up the general position of all the schools of Islamic law in terms that illustrate just how far the legal superstructure of dhimmitude is from the myth of Islamic tolerance: "The basis of the Islamic attitude towards unbelievers is the law of war; they must be either converted or subjugated or killed (excepting women, children, and slaves); the third alternative, in general, occurs only if the first two are refused."[35]

This is, of course, in complete accord with the choices for unbelievers explained by the prophet Muhammad in the hadith quoted above: "When you meet your enemies who are polytheists, invite them to three courses of action." So also does Schacht's summary of the schools' restrictions on dhimmis contain no surprises for anyone familiar with Ghamdi's statement or the dictates of *'Umdat al-Salik:* "The treaty necessarily provides for the surrender of the non-Muslims with all duties deriving from it, in particular the payment of tribute, i.e., the fixed poll tax *(jizya)* and the land-tax *(kharaj)*, the amount of which is determined from case to case.[36]

That may be, but another Islamic legal manual, the *Hedaya,* stipulates that "it is lawful to require twice as much"[37] from dhimmis as from Muslims—so while the rate may vary from dhimmi to dhimmi, it must never become a light or easy burden. Bat Ye'or illustrates in her exhaustive and illuminating historical works that this was seldom a temptation that Muslim rulers found difficult to overcome.

Schacht continues: “The non-Muslims must wear distinctive clothing and must mark their houses, which must not be built higher than those of Muslims, by distinctive signs; they must not ride horses or bear arms, and they must yield the way to Muslims; they must not scandalize the Muslims by openly performing their worship or their distinctive customs, such as drinking wine; they must not build new churches, synagogues, and hermitages; they must pay the poll tax under humiliating conditions.”[38]

These laws are not strictly enforced today in most Islamic states. In Saudi Arabia they aren’t because of that nation’s status as the Muslim holy land. Non-Muslims aren’t allowed to practice their religion at all in Saudi Arabia. Muhammad directed his followers to “turn out all *Al-Mushrikun* [unbelievers] from the Arabian Peninsula”;[39] any non-Muslims who go to Saudi Arabia to work must strictly avoid any religious expression—those who dare violate this restriction have been imprisoned, expelled from the country, and sometimes even tortured.[40] Elsewhere the laws of dhimmitude gave way in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to pressure from the European colonial powers and were not components of the secular constitutions adopted by many Muslim states in the postcolonial period.

Nonetheless, centuries of enforcement of these laws have produced lingering cultural attitudes. That the Christian population of the Middle East, historically a significant presence, has plummeted during roughly the same period as the rise of radical Islam is no accident. While the ancestors of today’s Middle Eastern Christians had no choice but to accept dhimmitude and lived within its restrictions for centuries without knowing or having the possibility of any other life, their contemporary descendants have grown up in a much freer environment, emancipated by secularism. Instead of reverting to the dhimmi subjugation that increasing numbers of their Muslim neighbors wish to impose on them, they are simply opting out of the region alto-gether—to its immense personal and cultural loss.

Nonetheless, this is understandable in light of the fact that Christians and other non-Muslims still face widespread discrimination and harassment all across the Islamic world. One notorious example was the case of Robert Hussein Qambar Ali, a Kuwaiti national who converted from Islam to Christianity in the 1990s. Hussein was arrested and tried for apostasy, even though the Kuwaiti constitution guarantees the freedom of religion and says nothing about the traditional Islamic prohibition on conversion to another faith. Mohammad al-Jadai, one of Hussein’s prosecutors, explained: “Legislators did not regulate the

question of apostasy in the Constitution because they never thought this kind of thing could happen here. The freedom of belief in the Constitution applies only to the religion of birth."[41]

This is a perspective that could only be informed by the Sharia provisions of dhimmitude. Such deeply ingrained attitudes informed the proceedings against Hussein. When he asked during a court hearing to see a memorandum from the prosecution, the prosecutor told the judge, "His blood is immoral! This document contains verses from the Holy Qur'an and should not be touched by this infidel!" Then he began quoting a passage from the memorandum that made abundantly clear the relationship between Kuwait's ostensibly tolerant secular law and the Sharia: "With grief I have to say that our criminal law does not include a penalty for apostasy. The fact is that the legislature, in our humble opinion, cannot enforce a penalty for apostasy any more or less than what our Allah and his messenger have decreed. The ones who will make the decision about his apostasy are: our Book, the Sunna, the agreement of the prophets and their legislation given by Allah."[42]

Later, when his home was burglarized, Hussein knew that he would get no satisfaction if he told Kuwaiti authorities about the crime. "I could tell them, but it is not a crime to steal or vandalize the property of an apostate. The police wouldn't even acknowledge that a burglary took place."[43]

Even in places where it is not fully enforced, the Sharia retains the status of a kind of metalaw, overriding and superseding the laws of the land whenever necessary. Consequently, the environment for non-Muslims in Islamic societies is not positive, and as radicalism increases, Muslims grow increasingly less tolerant toward their non-Muslim neighbors.

RADICAL MUSLIM THEORISTS ON NON-MUSLIMS

That intolerance is fueled also by the writings of some of the most popular and influential radical Muslim theorists of modern times. In the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood theorist Sayyid Qutb's multivolume commentary on the Qur'an, *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an* (In the Shade of the Qur'an), Qutb writes ven omously of Jews and Christians. In his exegesis of the verse mandating warfare against the People of the Book (sura 9:29), Qutb recites a litany of Islam's supposed historical grievances against the Jews, concluding: "In modern history,

the Jews have been behind every calamity that has befallen the Muslim communities everywhere. They give active support to every attempt to crush the modern Islamic revival and extend their protection to every regime that suppresses such a revival. The other people of earlier revelations, the Christians, has been no less hostile."[44]

For Qutb. this hostility is not the result of various historical circumstances that could change for the better, or be overcome through dialogue and attempts at mutual understanding. On the contrary, Qutb explains that

> the Qur'anic statements concerning both groups are expressed as if they are stating established facts. God says to the unbelievers: "They shall not cease to fight you until they force you to renounce your faith, if they can." (2:217) He also says about the people of earlier revelations: "Never will the Jews nor yet the Christians be pleased with you unless you follow their faith." (2:120) This method of expression suggests that these are definitive statements describing permanent attitudes not individual or temporary cases. When we cast a quick glance at the history of these relations, on the basis of the attitudes adopted by the Jews and the Christians toward Islam and the Muslims in all periods of history, we will appreciate the full import of these true statements by God Himself. We also realize that such hostile attitudes are the rule, not the exception.[45]

What then is to be done with these renegades, these untrustworthy, dishonest, and hateful individuals? The Qur'an, of course, gives the answer: they must be "utterly subdued," in line with sura 9:29. Qutb explains: "As the only religion of truth that exists on earth today, Islam takes appropriate action to remove all physical and material obstacles that try to impede its efforts to liberate mankind from submission to anyone other than God. . . . The practical way to ensure the removal of these physical obstacles while not forcing anyone to adopt Islam[46] is to smash the power of those authorities based on false beliefs until they declare their submission and demonstrate this by paying the submission tax."[47]

Similarly, Indian radical theorist Sayyid Abdul Ala Maududi says that Muslims must fight against Jews, Christians, and others "not as one might think to compel the unbelievers into embracing Islam. Rather, their purpose is to put an end to the sovereignty and supremacy of the unbelievers so that the latter are

unable to rule over men. The authority to rule should only be vested in those who follow the true faith; unbelievers who do not follow this true faith should live in a state of subordination. … 'To pay *jizyah* of their hands humbled' refers to payment in a state of submission."[48]

These men and other influential radicals were deeply traditionalist. Where socialism and Arab nationalism had introduced ideas of tolerance and equality for non-Muslims in the Muslim world, these theorists strenuously dissented on Islamic grounds. Qutb explicitly rejected democracy, socialism, communism, and all other ideologies as non-Islamic, and pitched his Islamic supremacism and intolerance precisely as the Islamic alternative.

That is the view that has swept the world in recent decades, with the rise of Islamic radical groups, global in extent, that look to Qutb as a forefather and intellectual mentor. It is ironic that the same period has seen the most intense growth of the myth of Islamic tolerance.

NOTES

1. United States District Court, Eastern District of Virginia, *United States of America v. Randall Todd Rover, Ibrahim Ahmed Al-Hamdi, Masoud Ahmad Khan, Yong Ki Kwon, Mohammed Aatique, Seifullah Chapman, Hammad Abdur-Raheem, Donald Thomas Surratt, Caliph Basha Ibn Abdur-Raheem, Khwaja Mahmood Hasan, Sabri Benkhala,* June 2003, http://news.findlaw.com/hdocs/docs/terrorism/usroyer603 (accessed August 23, 2004). See also Terry Frieden, '"Jihad Network' Suspects Plead Not Guilty," CNN.com, July 3, 2003, http://www.cnn.com/2003/LAW/07/03/terror.arraignment Nicholas K. Geranios, "Second Man with Ties to University of Idaho Arrested," Associated Press, March 14, 2003. For Khafagi's position with CAIR, which CAIR reportedly denies, see Carol Eisenberg, "A Troubling Year for Muslims in America," *Newsday*, September 2, 2002. For Ghassan Elashi, the third CAIR official arrested, and other illuminating information about the group, see Joe Kaufman, "The CAIR-Terror Connection," *Front-PageMagazine.com,* April 29, 2004, http://www.frontpagemag.com/Articles/Read Article.asp?

ID=13175 (accessed August 23, 2004).

2. Bat Ye'or, "Myths and Politics: The Tolerant Pluralistic Islamic Society: Origin of a Myth," paper presented at the Lord Byron Foundation for Balkan Studies and International Strategic Studies Association Symposium on the Balkan War, August 31, 1995, http://www.dhimmitude.org/archive/LectureEl.html (accessed August 22, 2004).

3. Many of these have been collected at Bat Ye'or's Web site, "Dhimmis and Dhimmitude: The Status of Minorities under Islamic Rule," an outstanding resource: www.dhimmitude.org. The spelling of words, when not in a quotation, has generally been Americanized throughout, even in articles originally published in the United Kingdom.

4. Bat Ye'or, "Myths and Politics."

5. Ibid.

6. Quoted in Bat Ye'or, *The Decline of Eastern Christianity under Islam: From Jihad to Dhimmitude: Seventh-Twentieth Century*, trans. Miriam Kochan and David Littman (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1996), p. 384.

7. Ibid., p. 423.

8. "Soldier Held on Suspicion of Espionage," CNN.com, February 13, 2004, http://www.cnn.com/2004/US/02/12/natl.guard.espionage/ (accessed August 23, 2004).

9. Stephen Brown, "France's Rushdie Affair," FrontPageMagazine.com, November 21, 2003, http://www.frontpagemag.com/ Articles/ReadArticle.asp?ID= 10931 (accessed August 23, 2004).

10. "Carey Makes Fresh Islam Speech," BBC News online, May 12, 2004, http://news.bbc.co**.Uk**/l/hi/ulc/3708859.stm (accessed August 23, 2004).

11. "Fears as Young Muslims 'Opt Out,'" BBC News online, March 7, 2004, .Uk/l/hi/uk/3539535.stm (accessed August 23, 2004).

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